

## *United States Mission to the United Nations*

### **AMBASSADOR SICHAN SIV**

Statement on the United Nations 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration  
San Francisco, 25 June 2005

(AS DELIVERED)

Thank you very much for that kind introduction. It is a great honor for me to represent President Bush and Secretary of State Rice at this celebration.<sup>1</sup> I bring with me their warm greetings. I am grateful to our hosts for organizing this important commemoration.

Each time I am in California, I say to myself: *"I'll be back."* (*Laughter.*) The United Nations and everyone else, including me, have left our hearts in San Francisco. (*Laughter.*) It is the UN's shining city on the hill. This is where an idealistic spark was ignited, where the Organization's beacon was lit, where the world hoped to find its way out of the darkness of the Second World War. Had it been the UN headquarters, San Francisco would have offered an ocean view towards the world's largest continent. The Pacific gateway reminds me of the concept of life in Asia. It is divided into cycles of 12 years each. The most important birthday is the 60<sup>th</sup>. It is the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> cycle and the high point of one's life. As the Charter turns 60 tomorrow, it is a good time to reflect on the UN's accomplishments and to look at the challenges ahead. It also offers a momentous opportunity for the UN to come to its full strength.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first to use the term "United Nations,"<sup>2</sup> as a rallying cry for forces battling the Axis Powers. Allies and others yearning for peace went on to call themselves "United Nations." To embody their hopes, fifty countries signed the UN Charter here on 26 June 1945.<sup>3</sup> President Harry S. Truman had reminded participants that, *"If we do not want to die together in war, we must learn to live together in peace."*<sup>4</sup>

America was present at the creation. We are the UN's host country and its largest contributor. The United States and United Nations have the same first name, in case you didn't notice. (*Laughter.*) We share many of the same principles: people, peace, freedom, and common welfare. Our Constitution and Charter start with the same words: *"We The People(s)."* Multilateral diplomacy is an important tool to promote American foreign policy. It includes

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<sup>1</sup> Previous administration participations included Presidents Truman in 1945, Eisenhower in 1955, Johnson in 1965, Sec. Of State Shultz in 1985, and Clinton in 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Roosevelt coined "United Nations" while speaking to Churchill on August 14, 1941 on the HMS Prince of Wales off the Newfoundland coast. On January 1, 1942 the term was used in the "Declaration by United Nations" when 26 nations pledged their joint fight against the Axis Powers.

<sup>3</sup> The U.S. delegation, appointed by Roosevelt, was chaired by Sec. of State Edward Stettinius and included Cong. Sol Bloom, Sen. Thomas Connally, Cong. Charles Eaton, Virginia Gildersleeve, Harold Stassen, and Sen. Arthur Vandenberg. The following served as Advisers: Charles Bohlen, Ralph Bunche, John Foster Dulles, Archibald McLeish, Leo Pasvolksy, Nelson Rockefeller, and Adlai Stevenson. Former Sec. of State Cordell Hull was also a delegation member, but hospitalized in Washington during the Conference.

<sup>4</sup> Message broadcast in connection with the opening of the United Nations Conference on International Organization, San Francisco, April 25, 1945.

preventing conflicts, eradicating poverty, preserving cultural heritage, promoting economic growth, and advancing democracy and freedom. It makes the world safer, more democratic, and prosperous. Therefore, it is in our national interest to advocate an effective United Nations.

In 1950, President Truman suggested to an infant UN that we should try to settle differences by peaceful means, but we could not rely on negotiation alone to preserve the peace. To be an effective instrument, he added “*the United Nations has no choice except to use the collective strength of its members to curb aggression.*” Its operations in Korea “*greatly strengthened the cause of peace.*”<sup>5</sup>

America will defend our nation and promote its values. We will do so independently when necessary. And we will also work with the Security Council, when collective action is useful and justified to meet threats to international peace and security. While a consensus among Member States on key issues is desirable, we see it as a means to an end, not an end in itself. At the same time, we continue to help people around the world realize the abundance that freedom and democracy offer.

Three principles guide the United States at the UN. **First, we want the UN to live up to its founders’ vision.** The UN advances peace and prosperity when it works against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as when it promotes democracy and freedom, protects refugees, and combats human trafficking. For example, the UN assisted Afghanistan in its historic democratic election last year, and in Iraq this past January. In Africa and elsewhere, it has been working to bring security and stability. It is helping to turn societies away from old conflicts, overcome persistent poverty, and fight HIV/AIDS.

George Bush<sup>6</sup> (41), the only American to have addressed the UN as ambassador, vice president and president, said in 1989: “*Nothing can stand in the way of freedom’s march. There will come a day when freedom is seen the world over to be a universal birthright of every man and woman, of every race and walk of life. Even under the worst circumstances, at the darkest of times, freedom has always remained alive.*”<sup>7</sup> This week, Aung San Suu Kyi celebrated her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday under house arrest. President George W. Bush (43) saluted her strength, courage, and personal sacrifice: “*Only a return to democracy and reintegration with the international community can bring the freedom and prosperity that the people of Burma deserve.*”<sup>8</sup>

**Our second principle is that multilateral institutions must be effective.** They must have a clear and unifying purpose, fit for Member States to uphold their core values. The end of the Cold War has enlivened prospects for the vision of UN founders. The UN can help preserve peace by defending human rights, improving health, and increasing education for needy people. When it does, we will continue to be supportive. When it falls short, we will tell so. President George W. Bush has said: “*From the defeat of terror, to the alleviation of disease and hunger,*

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<sup>5</sup> Address to the UN General Assembly, October 24, 1950.

<sup>6</sup> Ambassador to the UN from 1971-73, he addressed the Security Council as Vice President on July 14, 1988 and as President on January 31, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> Address to the UN General Assembly, September 25, 1989.

<sup>8</sup> Statement by the President, White House Press Release, June 17, 2005.

*to the spread of human liberty...we welcome, and we need, the help, advice, and wisdom of friends and allies.”*<sup>9</sup>

**In our third guiding principle, America wants good stewardship of UN resources.**

As Members strive to make the Organization more effective, we must focus on its management and finances to ensure the highest standards of integrity and efficiency. The United States has championed reforms for making all processes “results-based.” We owe it to the idealism and goodwill of citizens everywhere to make sure that the UN is using its resources wisely. In particular, we owe it to the denied, deprived, and displaced.

This September will be the fifth anniversary of the Millennium Summit, featuring a “High Level Event.” The Secretary General has made an important series of proposals, entitled “In Larger Freedom.” The United States is pleased with the emphasis on freedom, human rights, democracy, and rule of law. We appreciate its support for a UN Democracy Fund that was proposed by President Bush last September.<sup>10</sup> We agree with the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission to deal comprehensively with post-conflict situations and help transitional countries recover and build civil institutions. Changes to Secretariat management--including budget, personnel and oversight--are needed for efficiency. The Office of Internal Oversight Services should be strengthened, with more auditing and evaluation of what works and what does not. Program mandates should be reviewed to see if they deserve extension. Just like peacekeeping operations, they should be assessed to see if more pressing causes deserve resources and personnel.

The consensus on development should include reform and rule of law, needed for economic and social progress. National governments are ultimately responsible for their own development. An enabling environment characterized by economic freedom and a vibrant private sector can help alleviate poverty and produce growth. America sees these connected to the individual’s value. We will move to further empower each person’s potential.

The Organization has grown from 50 to 191 Members. When oppressive regimes fall, governments should become more representative. They should govern justly and invest in their people. They should bring new vision, values, and principles that are more in line with the Charter. As the Community of Democracies continues to grow, we will see its members play an even more important role in setting the agenda. Working together, nations committed to rule of law at home will have the most to offer to build it globally. We also look to transform memberships elsewhere, such as in the proposed Human Rights Council, where increasingly the good should replace the bad and the ugly. On Security Council reform, our standard remains improving its effectiveness.

In modern civilization, no nation has contributed more to humanity than the United States of America. From aspirin to light bulb, from automobile to airplane, from telephone to computer, American ingenuity and creativity have played a leadership role in improving the quality of life from cradle to coffin. Truman’s Marshall Plan, Kennedy’s Agency for International Development, and Bush’s Millennium Challenge Account are our most important

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<sup>9</sup> Radio Address, May 31, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> Address to the UN General Assembly, September 21, 2004.

development policies. America is there for elections, economics, and emergencies. We are there to respond to earthquakes, tsunamis, and other natural disasters. We have liberated oppressed people and left them with parliaments and prosperity. Compare the ashes of Europe and Japan in 1945 with their current democratic foundations and architectural marvels. And we are proud that the United Nations was born in America.

The United States stands ready to consult, coordinate, cooperate. And to lead. In his first Congressional address, President George W. Bush said in Spanish, “*Juntos podemos.*” (Together we can.)<sup>11</sup> There is so much that each of us can do. Together, we can do so much more. The UN founding fathers understood that multilateral activities would be most effective when exercised by responsible, free, and democratic nations. America wants more accountability and transparency, and less bureaucracy. This will allow the UN to maintain its credibility and legitimacy. It is the best way for the United Nations and the United States to remain true partners in ensuring peace and democratic prosperity.

This 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary has great personal significance for me, as my life has been closely intertwined with the United Nations. As a child in Cambodia, I waved a flag to welcome Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld. Many of us were inoculated by UNICEF. Among my Asian and Buddhist brethren, there was a strong affinity with Secretary General U Thant in the sixties. In the following decade, the UN played a key role in maintaining peace and security. However, in 1975 the Khmer Rouge turned Cambodia into a land of blood and tears. Every Cambodian lost something and someone dearest. I lost my mother, older sister, and brother and their families: 15 people altogether were clubbed to death. Having said “*Never Again*” at the end of World War II, the UN was powerless to stop the genocide. Only five countries spoke out against these worst violations of human rights: Australia, Canada, Norway, United Kingdom, and United States. In 1976 I escaped the forced labor camps to Thailand, where I was under the care of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Then, I was able to come to America and start my new life as a free man. With two dollars in my pocket and a heart full of hope, I was on my way to reap the benefits from this Promised Land. Now, I have the enormous privilege to represent the United States at the United Nations. Each time I walk in, my colleagues look at me. Through me, they see America. They see its promise. They see its opportunity. They listen in complete silence when I pronounce: “*On behalf of the President, the People, and the Government of the United States...*” That is my proudest moment!

Thank you. (*Applause.*)

This document can be obtained at: <http://www.usunnewyork.usmission.gov/05ss0625.pdf>

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<sup>11</sup> Address to the Joint Session of Congress, February 27, 2001.